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HOWARD HENDERSON, D. D.

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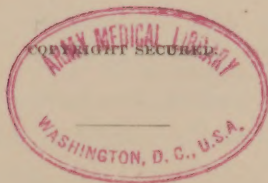
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RATIONAL METHOD OF DISPOSING
OF THE DEAD,

—BY—

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CINCINNATI:

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PREFACE.

When the corner-stone of the Crematory at New York City (Mount Olivet) was laid, I was one of the speakers, and was led to thoroughly examine into the merits of the Incineration of the dead. Recently, I was invited by the Preacher's' Meeting, of Cincinnati, to deliver an address before it, which, being reported in the city press, led to a demand for a more public delivery, and I discoursed upon the subject in Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church, the overflowing congregation showing the popular interest. Not having full liberty, within the limits of a service, to fully elaborate the subject, I anticipated a demand for the sermon and enlarged it to the present form. Hastily prepared for the printer, and rushed through the press, I beg the indulgence of the reader as to its form and faults.

THE AUTHOR.

Cincinnati, O., February 9, 1891.

THE RATIONALE AND RELIGION —OF— CREMATION. —

Cremation is opposed by custom and prejudice. It is supported by economy, hygiene, and sentiment. It dispenses with costly caskets and cemetery lots. It removes all danger arising from gases that poison the atmosphere and water. It is most favored by physicians and scientists. It is most antagonized by the ignorant, superstitious, bigoted, and by the tyranny of tradition and usage. That sentiment, when properly educated, approves, is less apparent, but equally true. It requires pluck and patience to advocate it. No man who is afraid of the fire should invite the thunder of the guns trained to enfilade his lines. Those who dare to speak should be tolerant; for, "though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, I am nothing."

The burial service recognizes cremation: "Ashes to ashes." Long has tenderness breathed, "Peace to thy ashes!" Poetry finds

nothing repulsive in the relic ash. Gerald Massey wailed:

"Set is the sun of my years,
And over a few poor ashes
I sit in my darkness and tears."

Bayard Taylor writes of "ashes pale," and Tennyson says:

"And from his ashes may be made,
The violet of his native land."

Pope declares:

"And heaven that every virtue bears in mind,
E'en to the ashes of the just is kind."

Gray sings in elegiac strain:

"E'en from the tomb the voice of nature cries,
E'en in their ashes live their wonted fires."

Hazlitt, on English poets, says, "the flame that stands upon the altars of the temple of fame is kindled from the *ashes* of dead men." Thus poetry marries propriety. "The storied urn" of Westminster, the crypts of the Escorial, the Columbarium of the church, make softer appeal to the tender heart than the grave:

"Dread thing! Men shiver when thou art named;
Nature appall'd
Shakes off its wonted firmness."

"Gilded tombs do worms infold," and when decay has done its ghastly work,

"A heap of dust alone remains of thee;
'Tis all thou art, and all the proud shalt be."

Dust and ashes are interchangeable terms. Ashes are the residuum of burned matter—

the indestructible elements of substance from which the ethereal constituents, carbon and hydrogen, have been set free. Every dead substance is the relic ash of a previous fire. The sands, salts and clays are the ashes of burned metals, the products of oxidation. All life is a PHŒNIX rising from the ashes of a funeral pyre. A tree is the mausoleum of its dead leaves. Each ring of increase is dead wood kept from decay by the vital envelop of its last year's growth. A lobster receives its mail from a forge, and a butterfly is the fire-blossom of a caterpillar. In the crucible the crude ore becomes a shining metal. The flame that burns in a blossom feeds on the fire at its axle—the withered cotyledon. The human body lives by combustion. Every muscular movement flings aside the ashes of the fuel consumed in the lung-furnace. Exhalation, perspiration, shake the grate and the ashes fall into the pan. Disease or old age is the body on fire. Death is a putting-out of the human fires. Everywhere, in nature, the fire of life burns up all its decay and prepares it for new growths. The waste of the body from imperfect nutrition is, literally, a "feeding on ashes." Incineration gives "beauty for ashes"—

in its carved urn. Putrefaction is a slow burning. Combustion crimsons the autumnal leaf, kindles the rose on the cheek of beauty, and with a "live coal from the altar" flames in carnation on the lips. An autumnal conflagration spreads splendor over the woods and along the vine-upholstered glades. Every spring a pentecostal fire descends and renews the earth's Eden. It is called *Eremacausis*—a gradual burning—oxidation. The earth is to be renewed by fire. "The elements will melt with fervent heat, and all the works therein shall be burned up," and yet, from Nature's funeral pyre will rise "the new earth and heavens wherein dwelleth righteousness." The new uprising of earth, of life, is ever out of the ashes.

Why should we shrink from that most beneficent element in nature, that which, because the brightest and best thing known to men, was esteemed by them as divine, and which inspiration has chosen as its favorite symbol—fire? It was a burning, but unconsumed bush, that taught Moses the perpetuity of the Church, which was destined to survive every fiery ordeal and to flourish in immortal green; it was a pillar of fire, making every tent of the

camp and every sand of the desert ruddy with its glow, standing in their midst by night, that was a token to the wandering exiles of a divine presence; it was the flashing Shekinah, that shone a visible mentor of God's abiding between the wings of the Cherubim above the sacred ark; it was a chariot of fire, drawn by flaming steeds, that conveyed Elijah to the congress of "the spirits of just men made perfect;" it was as the Sun of Righteousness, that Malachi represented the Messiah, rising with healing wings on the world, to dispel its darkness and to warm its heart; it is the chosen symbol of the refining presence and power of the Holy Ghost; it is a baptism of fire that cleanses the sinful soul, and it was, as with cloven tongues of flame, that the polyglotic witness of the church was emblemed; it was, with a brightness above the meridian glory of a Syrian sun, that the glorified Christ manifested himself to Saul, and a woman, standing in its midst, taught St. John the coming power of consecrated womanhood, and it is, in the crucible of the final conflagration, that the old world is to be made a chrysolite for the throne of Righteousness and the court of Saints. It is buried sunshine that bakes our bread, glows in

our grates, smelts our metals, whirls our spindles, dashes our shuttles, and drives the chariots of civilization. "The Powerful King of Day rejoicing in the East," transfigures sky and earth, and, from a throne of fire, with a scepter of light, sways the spheres, and warms them on their noiseless way; it is the star-lamps that jewel the canopy of night, and the moon that sheds on the landscape the weird imitations of a mimic day; it is the sunbeam that kisses every flower into blossom, greens the meadows, dimples them with buttercups, and hangs the hills with festoons of verdant vines; it is the summer smile that goldens the grain and gives the roseate blush, and succulent sweets to ripened fruit; it is the flash of sapphires that makes the towers of the New Jerusalem to flame with dazzling splendor, and that kindles the glory of celestial crowns.

What marvel, then, that untutored men should have selected fire as the divinity that brightens, and beautifies, and blesses the world? Is it strange that the æsthetic Greek saw the beauteous Apollo glow in the morning sun, and wheel his rosy tinted car adown the western sky; the chaste Diana glide down the starry

steep to kiss Endymion to sleep; Phœbus mount the chariot of the sun, to drive in the Olympic circles of the distant heavens, and Pluto to preside at the flaming forge to fashion the armor of the warring gods? Let an omnipotent extinguisher quench the sun, and every living thing would die, and every sphere would turn into globes of ice, without a gulf-stream in all the frozen seas of space. Fire is the source of all vital energy. It grew the gigantic ferns and *conifera* laminated in our coal-measures. It fused the foundations of granite on which the world is built; it burns up all waste and decay, and renews the freshness and vigor of every plant and animal; it was the lapidary that imprisoned light in the diamond, and polished the shells that sing of the sea; and it warms every seed into germination, and incubates every egg. In all these fragmentary and temporary combustions, God adumbrates what he will do in the final purification of all things soiled by sin. "And if any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, every man's work shall be made manifest; it shall be revealed by fire, and the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is." E'en

now, on every new heart, this holy fire is burning as a vestal flame. "Quench not the Spirit." It is fabled that when Ceres descended from the gods to men, she came to Eleusis in the garb of an aged woman, and was engaged by the wife of Celeus as a nurse to her son. Under the nurture of the goddess, the infant "throve like a god." He was given no food, but Ceres breathed on him as he lay on her burning breast, and every night she warmed him with unknown fires. Thus she made him as immortal as herself. The warm breath of the Holy Spirit thus makes us "partakers of the divine nature." And as by the concealed fire in every vital body, the physical nature is purged of all waste, and is enabled to elaborate the energy of plants into muscular power and nervous sensibility, and store it as elements of its own substantial strength; so, by the holy fire, our hearts are cleansed of all impurities, and can appropriate and affine the graces of Christian life, and become "mete for an inheritance with the saints in light."

The baptism of fire will finish what it began, clarify all minds with celestial light, fill the cruse of the heart with the ever-replenishing oil of gladness, and touch and transmute all lips

with coals from the altar of "the temple not made with hands." And the sea of glass, mingled with fire, shall ever reflect, as mountain lakes the starry hosts, the lustre of sainted worshipers, lifting their snowy wings, in rhythm, with their harps and hallelujahs. Were I not an adoring subject of Him, who dwelleth in light inaccessible, I would be a Fire-worshiper.

As Lalla Rookh exclaims:

"And see, the Sun himself!—on wings
Of glory up the East he springs.
Angel of Light! who from the time
Those heavens began their march sublime,
Hath first of all the starry choir,
Trode in his Maker's steps of fire."

And from this benefactor and vice-gerent of God (who is "a consuming fire") in Nature's realm, we shrink back appalled and covet and court the smothering earth, the dreary darkness, and the devouring worm of the grim and ghastly grave. Our "fears belie our hopes," and, in slavery to a hereditary prejudice, we are ready to burn as a blasphemer, the reformer who dare to voice the dictum of a wisdom, whose premises no logic can flaw, and no cunning casuistry can challenge.

Cremation inurns the ashes of the dead, like

the pot of manna treasured for remembrance in the ark, but does not preclude their burial, nor outlaw the cemetery. Sanitation requires deep graves, from whose grim caverns bereaved love recoils. The rattling clods seem the artillery of woe shattering the heart. The ash interment answers the poet's prayer, "Lie lightly on my ashes, gentle earth." Harmless as aromatic powder, the ashes require no deep and dreary grave, for they "smell sweet and blossom in the dust." Burying the ashes would diminish the area of our cemeteries, reduce the cost of plots, bring their ownership within the means of multitudes now denied our Greenwoods and Spring Groves, and driven with their dead, by poverty, to briar-grown yards or Potter's Fields. By narrowing the grounds, landscape gardening would make them engaging to the eye of grief. Crowned with evergreens, tapestried with verdure, dappled with flowers, broidered with box, and watered by fountains, our cemeteries would be what Richter called them, "the green mountain tops of a far distant world," and make more lissom Longfellow's lines:

"This is the field and acre of our God,
This is the place where human harvests grow."

We build our marble fancies to disguise the terrors of the tomb, but from them float the mephitic gases that waft disease on the wings of every wind to the vitals of cities. We disinter, leaving the larger part of the body moldering in the vacated grave, and transport a few musty bones, never sensate, and bury these phosphate relics, and by an illusive conceit, flatter ourselves that we weep over the dust of our dead. Dusty mummies are sold as fertilizers, or burned for fuel. "From human mold we reap our daily bread," and "whole buried towns support the dancers heels." We shrink at the thought of a memorial urn in our homes, and treasure, in the domestic museum, an embalmed Egyptian or a desiccated Indian cadaver.

Traditional prejudice, hoary with age, insists on earth-burial, because Jesus passed through the portals of the grave, and "the lamp of his love is a guide through its gloom." But, in fact, Jesus was never buried, but laid away in Joseph's New Sepulchre, hewn out of the rock. The Holy One never saw corruption. "The lamp of his love" burned dimly in the stifled air of no vault, nor was it quenched beneath the

smothering earth. Literalists object to incineration because of their material views of the resurrection. Will not "the pale martyr in his shirt of fire," whose ashes the winds have winnowed and wafted whithersoever they list, rise again? Will not the sea give up its dead, though the fishes have feasted on the flesh, and waves wasted and worn the bones of the wrecked? Will not the heathen come from the ashes of the Suttee? He who could make men of dust, can raise them from ashes, from urn as well as grave. "That which thou sowest is not that body which shall be, but bare grain; but God *giveth* it a body as it hath pleased Him, and to every seed its own body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." The vital germ of the resurrection body is no more destroyed by incandescent heat doing its office in fifty minutes, than it is by slow burning—putrefaction—in fifty years. Like the Hebrew children cast into the furnace, heated seven times hotter than it was wont to be, yet coming out unscathed, so, the presence and power of "one like unto the Son of Man" is competent to bring from the dust of the crypt, from the ashes of the columbarium, a body like unto His own glorious body, upon

which shall not be the smell of decay or fire. The body that pleaseth God should please us. It is His pleasure to "change our vile bodies and fashion them like unto the glorious body" of His Son, and to preserve our personal identity, "every seed its own." "I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy [Christ's] likeness." In the crematory the body is enveloped with a rosy light, and it is at once reduced to its substantive elements. Put against this the rot and the worm, and can sentiment hesitate to choose the rapid from the slow burning? The heat, employed in incineration, is really annihilated as heat, and converted into molecular motion, and thus the original particles may more certainly subsist, retaining substantive identity, than when the body molds in the ground. We may thus resign from sight, and yet see by faith, that kindly power, which from the former kiln of nature "made us of clay and formed us men," and which is pledged to the overthrow of death and the grave.

Grieved love clips a lock of hair, bitterly knowing it can keep nothing else. Inurned ashes, kept as the Greeks kept their lares and penates, and as the Romans the effigies of their heroes, is far

more appealing to the tender susceptibilities of our hearts than putting in a pit of putrescence the corpse of our loved one. What sentimental value cathedrals, chapels, and church-yards would take on if their niches, crypts and mounds were filled with the cenotaphs and vases that ensafe the snowy ashes of the dear departed! How such thesauri of the dead would endear to worshipers the courts and campuses of our sacred temples! Every great city would have its Westminster, every capital its Escorial. Thus solid and surviving structures would be secured for sacred service. Church-yards, imparadised, would hold the ashes of the holy dead, and thus the liturgy might be fitly paraphrased, "In the midst of death we are in life." The grinning skull and the ghastly cross bones would no more be mementoes of death. The funeral torch would flame the prophesy of hope. A rosy light kindled would make the pallor of death to blush, and as the forest embroiders with crimson and gold its shroud, and lights an autumn fire with which to illuminate the fading and falling leaf, so, sorrow would gather color, and hope stand dressed with light to prophesy the radiant life to come.

"Interpose

No deathly angel 'twixt my face and thine,
But stoop thyself to gather my life's rose,
And smile away my mortal to divine."

After all, the soul should be our chief care. Neither moth, nor rust, nor decay, nor fire can touch *it*. It is in the body like the lamps of Gideon in the pitchers. Break the body, as the pitchers, and the spirit shines, as the lights. Literally, "we rise on the ashes of our dead selves." The cumbrous clog of earth drops, and the enfranchised soul "soars to bliss unfading and secure."

The vast sums of money, now sunk for use in expensive monuments, could far better be turned to helpfulness to the living. Let monumental charities recall the dead and perpetuate their memories. "We celebrate nobler obsequies by drying the tears of others than by shedding our own; and the fairest funeral wreath we can hang on their tomb is not so fair as a fruit-offering of good deeds."

In readjusting our methods of disposing of the dead, let us establish no ostentatious or costly style. When the funeral services are over, clear out the spectators. Let the bereaved be left alone with their dear relic. Let the body be attended by these, alone, to the crema-

tory. Give to the temple beautiful environment, Let a green sward greet the eye of grief and the fountain's spray shower on parterres of flowers Hang the chapel with pictures of hope, and fresco the ceilings with angelic figures, winged and mounting to the music of harps and hallelujahs. Dole no dismal dirges. Let the organ swell a jubilate until the air blossoms with triumphal notes. When the benignant light, glowing like an aurora, has done its etherealizing task, return the pearly ashes, simply inurned, to the custody of those who venerate the memory of the departed. Thus you will have helped to woo the heart from its woe, cheated the worm of its banquet, and prowling disease of its poisonous, basilisk breath. Let those who believe in the coronation of the holy dead wear white instead of black, laurels rather than cypress.

To make a dogma and create a conscience with reference to the mode of disposing of the dead is to pervert the province of Gospel authority. This is a question for Christian liberty and the decision of reason rather than of religion. The disciple of incineration is neither a heretic nor a ghoul. To favor cremation as a preferable method is not to pronounce against earth-burial.

Let every one decide for himself. Let science and sanitation speak, and give sentiment freedom. Turn not this great reform over to the guardianship and guidance of theosophs or the advocacy of sophomores. Treat the subject fairly. It will not down at the bidding of prejudice, nor be whistled down the wind by a sniff of holy horror. The growth of population is forcing the discussion upon the thoughtful in all populous centers. It is more a question of concern for the living and the lowly than for the dead. It must not be studied amid the verdant shades and sculptured tombs of Greenwood alone, but amid the crowded cemeteries where the poor and friendless are ditched and deserted.

For the benefit of the uninformed I will add, as a bar to prejudice, that, in incineration, no fire comes in contact with the corpse, no flame touches the flesh or bones at any stage of the process. The body is wrapped in a linen shroud, saturated with alum, and placed on a cradle, and shoved into a retort. The incineration chamber, built of fire-clay, is heated to about 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit. When the door is opened a beautiful rosy light is visible. The body is introduced, and immediately becomes incandescent;

all the liquid elements of which it is composed are evaporated, leaving about four per cent. of the matter of which it was constituted, or four pounds of pearly ashes to the hundred-weight. No foreign ash is mingled with the remains. The ashes are gathered into an urn of marble, alabaster, or terra-cotta, which is given to the friends, or left to occupy a niche in the crematory temple, or placed in the ground, as may be elected. There is no burning of the body as of a martyr at the stake, or an Indian suttee. There is neither smoke, nor smell, nor crackling of flame. All is silent and sweet. Nothing offends the eye, ear, or smell. It requires about one hour to each hundred-weight to complete the process, which is visible and audible to no one. It simply gives to the air the resolvable elements, and leaves indorous and harmless, for inurning, that which cannot be reduced. All feeling against *the method* is disarmed when witnessed. The cost of cremation, inurning, and custody of the vase, decently consummated, is about \$50. The cost of a funeral to the middle classes in New York averages \$150. Single graves in the public lots cost \$25, and in the private plots of Greenwood and Woodlawn \$75. About 4,000 acres in the

vicinity of New York are employed for cemetery purposes.

It is known that interments are not allowed in cities, but Brooklyn is rapidly girdling her "City of the Dead" with its silent population of nearly three hundred thousand, while New York is encroaching on Woodlawn. Calvary—the great Roman Catholic Cemetery—is only two miles from Greenpoint ferry, and the death-laden breezes fan the metropolis. Every bright day unsuspecting thousands make promenade parks of the cemeteries, while love, in its pilgrimage, loiters to mourn in "the valley of the shadow of death." The iconoclasm of the age has been busy removing the bones from urban cemeteries and burying them in undistinguishable bundles of bones in common pits.

Only a short time ago it was announced that the church-yard of a leading Protestant church in New York had been rifled of human remains to make a market for the realty encumbered by these graves in which "the rude forefathers of the hamlet slept"—the founders of the parish. Washington Square was formerly the Potter's Field of New York, and into this inviting park thousands seek health to loose it by breathing

poisonous emanations from decomposition beneath the velvety turf. The air of cemeteries is loaded with germs of disease, and Pasteur has demonstrated that angle-worms lift to the surface countless bacteria from the putrescence of the grave. Thus gayety "over the grave blind revels keep," and the mold of the dead feeds and fattens the turf and lays on the sward the snares that entrap the living to an untimely fate. If, as Dr. Young says, "religion is the proof of common sense," let us cease to count the beads of our rosary, to chatter the litany of prejudice, and address ourselves to the problems that philanthropy and piety present to reason.

It does not cost over fifty cents to bury a pauper. The boxes in which they are buried, in New York, are furnished by contract, by the thousand, at forty cents each, merely the cost of the rough lumber and the nails. The boxes are made by "roughs." The work is all done by paupers who, in turn are pall-bearers and grave-diggers. I have seen the little tug, laden with the human offal of the morgue, steam away amid shouts of laughter and with ribald song from the ghouls deputed for the ghastly service, who enjoy the voyage on the Sound as if it were

a mere holiday excursion. They sit on the boxes and puff their villainous cheroots, as they rattle off their profanity and chatter their vulgar slang and mongrel jests. Only numbers, in red chalk, are marked on the lids; for paupers and criminals are only known by numerals. Arrived at the island, the wretched cargo is hustled ashore, where drays serve as hearses to jolt the human freight to the Potter's field, barren of everything but some stunted shrubs and rows of countless stakes, bearing the numbers, only placed there for possible identification by coroners or resurrectionists. Seventy-five thousand lie there in the nameless graves, all buried without a tear or prayer, a mourner or a minister. The trench, awaiting the tug-load, is ten feet deep, into whose watery bottoms the friendless and feculent bodies are dumped with as much heartlessness as the scavengers of the *abattoirs* drop the debris of beasts into the soundless sea. The shovels clink against the stones, the clods with thundering thud fall on the boxes, and soon the last spade-full of smothering earth is cast, the numbered stakes are set and driven, and singing some beer-dive song, or shouting like idiots and swearing like fiends detailed from Pandemonium,

the soulless detail shuffles back to the tug and is steamed back to the Lazar-house. Tri-weekly, this ghastly masquerade of burial is repeated, and "darkest New York" goes beneath the clods "waiting the judgment day." Born in the cellar, bred in the alley-gutter, educated to think that vice and victuals, lust and pea-jackets, are interchangeable terms, they end life in the alms-house, "lie in state" in the morgue, get their passports from the coroner, and by pauper-criminals, like themselves, are put away in the Devil's Acre with as much unconcern as the feculent waste of the slaughter-house is dumped into the great salt sea. In the pauper quarter of Calvary Cemetery, New York, a trench is dug twelve feet deep and seven feet in breadth, and of a length only limited by the demand; the boxes are piled row on row, making a stairway of from five to seven steps, and with the earth so scant as not to conceal the bottom one from the next higher, and the next to the last from the one at the top. Our boastful America puts to the blush the Parisian *Fosse Commune*. Food for vermin while living, the scavenger worm feeds and fattens on their feculent carcasses when dead, and mephitic gases are exhaled to load the

air and be wafted to the lungs of the living in the marble palaces of the proud. In Brooklyn, a contractor for pauper burials, was detected in the use of candle and soap boxes, bought for a trifle, the bodies being mutilated to fit the gory and ghastly fragments to the narrow receptacles. And such is the cost of graves, even the lowest priced in the public lots being \$25 each, and ranging upward to \$150, that in the great cemeteries, Greenwood and Woodlawn being no exception, from three to six bodies are piled one on top of another, in a single grave, from 12 to 16 feet deep. Everytime one of these graves is opened a cloud of poisonous effluvia is liberated, to taint the air, and sting the vitals of the living. Trinity church-yard crowded with graves, is a distillery of death in the midst of the mighty throng surging along Broadway, and eddying down Wall Street. As early as 1806 the City Board of Health counselled the banishment of all grave-yards beyond the city boundaries, and Washington Square, like Lafayette Park, in Cincinnati, a Potter's Field, was so abandoned, and many half-decayed bodies and disjointed bones were trundled off, leaving the soil impregnated with disease germs, the remains

of decomposition, to steal through the soil to plague-smite those lured by its greens, and seeking a breathing-place as a refuge from the stifling air of crowded tenements and stuffy apartments. Down to this day, a thick blue haze every tranquil morning rests a pillar of death several feet thick, over the green sward of this inviting park. A doctor, familiar by long practice in the locality, has affirmed, that it is impossible to rear children on the lower floors of the stately mansions that line the square. Zymotic diseases have here a favorite breeding-place, and "the Prince of the Power of the Air," the waft of whose feathers is death, waves in triumph his invisible black plume.

Now, what is true of New York, is measurably true of the cemeteries of all great cities, and of many of the larger towns, and to some extent, of many of the village grave-yards. The lakes and fountains hold in solution the poisonous nitrates that infect the surrounding air. Water in Europe has become so fatal because of taint from the decomposing bodies of the buried millions, that every traveller is admonished by his guide book, to beware of its free use, and thus has grown the wine and beer-drinking habits of

the Continent, and the curse of intemperance is being promoted by the fouling of Nature's beverage by decomposition, so that it is more dangerous than the poisons that lurk in the alcoholic cup.

Steadily Brooklyn is belting Greenwood, in which 300,000 dead bodies molder, and New York is yearly creeping toward Woodlawn, while the crowded Island grave-yards, where multitudes are entrenched, are giving their daily tale of poison to the breezes which fan the great metropolii, that cluster about the Sound and Bay. Whole blocks, in Cincinnati, stand over the mould of thousands, while Spring Grove is gradually being girdled by the homes of the living. With the growth of population the evil increases, and the problem becomes more pressing with every decade. What shall we do to protect the living minority from the contagion innocently brewed for them in the grave-vats of "the silent majority?" As the destroying angel of pestilence that laid low "from Dan even to Beersheba seventy thousand men of Israel" folded its wings and spared its hand by the threshing floor of Araunah where David "built an altar unto the Lord, and offered burnt offerings and peace-offerings," so, the havoc wrought by

the Apollyon of decomposition, the tremor of whose plume is death, will only be arrested, as was the menacing hand stretched out upon Jerusalem to destroy it, when reason and religion better taught shall erect an altar of burnt-offering in the crematory temple. No love can be so intense as to be willing to keep the dead in the home, after putrefaction has begun its work. And, were we so bankrupt of common sense as to desire to do so, the Board of Health would interpose its inexorable edict for their removal. Could the dumb lips of the dead speak to us, would they lay such a tax on our grieved affection as to require of us the perpetuation of any custom that would imperil the health and longevity of the living?

I have seen people, thirsted by summer heat and unwonted exercise, quaff, as if a nectar draught, the sparkling waters of cemetery lakes. A London Medical Journal says: "It is a well-ascertained fact that the surest carrier and the most deadly *nidus* (nest) of Zymotic (caused by fermentation) contagion is this brilliant, enticing looking water, charged with the nitrates (a salt formed by the union of nitric acid with a base) which result from decomposition." The paren-

theses are the author's. The large majority of physicians, and all sanitary experts, and chemists, unite to render such knowledge, and to commend as a sanitary safe-guard nature's remedial element—fire, or incineration. Dr. Koch, the celebrated bacteriologist, now commanding the scientific attention of the world with his lymph treatment of lupus and consumption, has stated that the "blood of animals dying of splenic fever may be dried and stored for years, and then pulverized into a powder, and still the disease germs survive with power to produce infection." Dr. Wm. A. Hammond, on sanitary grounds, says: "I am heartily in favor of cremation and will be cremated." Dr. Clement Cleveland declares: "sanitary considerations are of such vital importance that they outweigh all conceivable objections." Dr. E. C. Seguin: "while I approve of it for general reasons, I do also, on the score of hygiene and prevention of disease." Dr. J. M. Schley: "for the good of the public and maintenance of public health, *all* considerations favor it, and all arguments against it are untenable." Dr. Bache McE. Emmet, "trusts that ere long cremation will be approved by all communities, and recognized as the only rational

solution of the momentous sanitary question." Dr. Carpenter, the greatest of physiologists, gives it his allegiance. The celebrated Dr. Gross was cremated as an example to help to the removal of prejudice. Dr. Domingo Friere, of Brazil, who investigated the cause of the fearful epidemic of Yellow fever that a few years ago wrought such ravages in Rio de Janeiro, says. "I came upon the dreadful fact that the soil of cemeteries in which the victims of the outbreak were buried was positively alive with microbean organisms exactly identical with those found in the vomitings and blood of those who, of Yellow fever, had died in the hospitals. The characteristic parasite permeates the soil of cemeteries even to the very surface. From the grave of a victim, buried for a year, one foot beneath the surface I took earth, and though it manifested nothing remarkable in appearance, or smell, micro-scopic analysis disclosed it thickly charged with yellow-fever germs. The cemeteries are nurseries of Yellow fever, the perennial foci of the disease." Prof. Bianchi showed that the Modena plague of 1828 was produced by excavations of earth in which, 300 years previously, victims of the similar plague had been buried. Medi-

cal experts declared that the cholera epidemic of London, in 1854, was caused by upturned soil in which the victims of the plague of 1665, which it took the great fire to exterminate, had been interred. In 1853—in the Fourth Municipal District of New Orleans, 452 people out of a 1000 died of Yellow fever, double that of any other section of the city. There were located vast cemeteries. Before such an appalling array of facts, confronting the vast growth of cities, how idly is he employed who, instigated by a mere sentiment, hereditary and conventional, blinds his eyes to the logic of facts, the demonstrations of science, the calm decisions of religion, and, refuses to hear, or hearing to heed, the voice of warning wisdom, and who, bigot-like proposes to outlaw and martyr a man who has courage enough to marshal truth, and to summon the lamp of science to light the mighty parade of invincibles!

I was confronted, the other day, by an eminent lawyer, accustomed to sift testimony and winnow witnesses, with an argument founded on Abraham's choice of the cave of Macphelah as the sepulcher for his beloved Sarah. Population was then scanty and caves were unpreempted. There was a vast difference in the infancy of

of time, as to what method should be chosen for the disposition of the dead, from the problem now challenging attention. When the commonest grave costs \$25, how shall we buy a cave for the storage of our dead? How long would the Mammoth Cave answer the demands of Cincinnati for a catacomb? Undoubtedly, if we could command the highly nitrogenized air and secluded niches of caves, in sufficient quantity for our purpose, we need not pother as to other methods.

The early Christians used the quarries for the repository of the bones of the saints, and the ashes of the martyrs—the catacombs. But these were simply colossal vaults, and these became so populous, that afterward the bones were built up into monumental piles. No such receptacles are at our command. The Parisian quarries were utilized in the same way. It was a happy circumstance that they had these crypts for the storage of the myriads of victims of the French Revolution, for, had earth-burial been employed, doubtless, pestilence would have been as busy in decimating France, as was the guillotine. But would we fancy such dreary crypts as the mausoleums of our dead? It was this custom of using

caves that led Job to write of the grave as "a land of darkness, as darkness itself; and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness." Had not the ancient Romans burned, but buried their dead, before the art of sanitation was known, and the poisonous exhalations from the graves of the thousands killed in the great wars, as well as those dying a natural death, had been added to the deadly gases arising from the Pontine marshes, Rome would have been untenable. They, however, would, to escape such a plague, have used the quarries and filled them long ere the persecutions of the early Christians.

The number estimated to have been stowed away in the catacombs at Rome, is estimated at six millions. The Crusaders carried away thousands of these bones; a sacrilege, to prevent which, the Popes issued their bulls of excommunication. But, Pope Paul removed many of the sacred relics of saints and martyrs, and distributed them to Cathedrals and Monasteries. We cannot, now, select caves and quarries as mausoleums and crypts. The choice is between earth-burial, cremation, and urned ashes. After a few more centuries, the earth will have

become one vast cemetery, or incineration will have been adopted as the only resort or refuge left the crowded globe and its menaced masses.

OBJECTIONS.

1. "It will destroy all evidences of crime, in case of suspected poisoning." But the custom of having bodies "embalmed," immediately succeeding death, puts an insuperable obstacle in the way of chemical analysis—the fluid used in the process containing arsenic, so that it would be impossible to tell whether the poisoning had been injected by the undertaker, or felonously administered. But this could be obviated by removing and examining the stomach in all cases of sudden deaths suggesting the possibility of poisoning. The objection is not to be considered, when it can be so easily obviated, and, incineration protects multitudes from poisoning by decomposition.

2. "The person may be alive." Well, such a probability is so rare as not to include an example in millions. In a morgue, where bodies are preserved and connected with a delicate electrometer, so that the slightest sign of life will ring an alarm-bell, not a single case of revivifi-

cation has sounded the signal. But how much more awful the possibility of emerging from coma, or a trance, fastened in a coffin, or imprisoned in a vault or a grave, without the possibility of a rescue! Besides, embalming, by the use of virulent chemicals, puts a period to life, should it linger. And in all cases, no disposition of the body should be made, either by burial or cremation, until putrefaction has settled the question of life. In nearly, if not every case, of a supposed revivification, founded on some change in the position of the body, it was due to muscular relaxation, or contraction, to electric or nervous convulsions, or mechanical movement occasioned by the elimination of gases brewed by fermentation.

3. "It would remove every relic remain of the loved departed, over which grief longs to linger." No more so by incineration than by the slower process of putrefaction. The natural decay finally leaves only "a heap of dust," mingled with foreign earth, so as to be undistinguishable from the clay or clod. This enters into the envioning soil and is absorbed by plants, or, in escaping gases, is wafted on the wind, and, finally, is absorbed in vegetable or animal

growths. The relic ash, pure as powdered pearl, inurned and buried, or placed in a niche in the columbarium (the crematory temple) or the crypt of churches, is innoxious, and may be more sentimentally preserved than the dust of putrefaction. The cremationist may fitly exclaim:

"O joy that in our embers
Is something that doth live,
That Nature yet remembers
What was so fugitive!"

He is not unmindful of the fact that what we have given to Dame Nature is received back, invested with the charm that, in this pure, unrepulsive residuum of the body, which has survived the heated retort, there may linger that human seed, undestroyed by fire, unabsorbed by the elements of soil and air, undevoured by the hunger of plants and animals,—from which the body that God giveth as "it hath pleased him," shall spring, when the reveillie of the resurrection is sounded by the waking trumpet of the Archangel of Immortality. And this germ of Beauty and of Love may yet yield us a companionship in grief our hearts failed to find in the grim cavern of the loathsome grave. No matter what the changes wrought by fermenta-

tion, frost, or fire, there is a sleepless Eye that keeps faithful vigil over the black dust, or pearly ash, and supported in its winkless watch by a Power that will, at the last, give "to every seed its own body," and *that*, fashioned after the model of all loveliness, the glorified body of our Saviour—Christ. This is the hopeful fact that challenges all change, and defies all ruin :

"And, oh ye fountains, meadows, hills and groves,
Think not of any severing of our loves !
Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might ;
I only have relinquished one delight
To live beneath your more habitual sway."

4. "To submit to cremation is to run in the teeth of custom, and incur the odium that traditional prejudice never fails to visit on those who dare something counter to its hoary decrees." But is it manly to yield to such an irrational demand, when sincere conviction has shown us "a more excellent way?" Shall we forever coast the sea, when ocean greyhounds offer to ferry us to distant shores we seek to explore? Shall we burn the astronomer who tells us that the star-fires are sun-centers of constellated worlds, or, look through his revealing lenses to see these mighty orbs forge across the argent seas of space? To yield, submissively, to the dicta of

truth, is to live within the Light of God, and to enjoy a conscious freedom in the transparencies of reason and religion, transcending the highest levels of those who see through a glass darkly, and who grope along the ragged edges of abysms, into whose dark depths a single false step may precipitate them. Why should we creep, like reptiles prone in the dust, when we may rise, resplendent as the Phœnix, and measure with broad and brilliant vans, the cloudless blue, whose pavilion is fretted with stars, and scalloped with the curtains of golden light? Are we ashamed of the martyrs who have hugged the stake, and, for principle, played with the hissing and bickering flames as if they had been the silken breathings of a zephyr? Most of the Apostles were translated through the witness fires of the faith, and, as much as Elijah, rode up the sky in a chariot of fire.

5. "But there are these who demand a Bible warrant, as a condition of yielding assent to cremation." The Bible is speechless on the subject. It was written on parchment; shall we discard our printed books? It was inspired in languages that are dead; shall we refuse to translate and read it in living tongues? The

primitive church worshiped in caves and catacombs; will we refuse the conveniences of churches and cushioned pews? Saul and his two sons were incinerated, and the case mentioned by Amos, is supposed to refer to those who died of pestilence, and who were cremated as a sanitary precaution, to prevent its spread by contagion. Why were the royal remains of King Saul and the two young princes cremated, if this method is to be esteemed as barbarous or revolting? If it was proper, in order to protect the living, in Amos' day, to incinerate the victims of the plague, would it be sacreligious, for like reasons, to pursue a similar course now, that we have facilities far superior, and which, when rightly understood, are not repellant to refined sensibility? We would ask the caviller why the accursed Jotham had no "burning made for him by the people, like the burning of his fathers," if it was not considered privatory of a *post mortem* honor?—and, more especially, too, in view of Jeremiah's prophecy of the last end and funeral rites to be accorded the worthy King of Judah, Jedediah, namely: "Thou shalt die in peace; and with the burnings of thy fathers, the former kings which were before

thee, so shall they burn odors for thee." Paul evidently felt it no dishonor to give his body to be burned. Rome and Greece, the most cultured nations of antiquity, practiced incineration. The tombs of the Hebrews were most like those of New Orleans, built above ground and hermetically sealed. They, nor the catacombs, possessed anything in common with the modern grave. Entombment in Abbey mausoleums and Cathedral crypts is quite another thing from burial in grave-yards. If earth-burial is the only orthodox method of disposing of the dead, and all other ways are to be esteemed as barbarous, what are we to think of the costly vaults of Greenwood and Spring Grove, and the tombs of Washington, Lincoln and Grant! Think of the attempt to rifle the remains of Lincoln; the successful theft of A. T. Stewart's body; and that of the father of President Harrison, and the finding of his body in the dissecting room of a Medical College, and the protracted guarding of the tombs of Garfield and Grant, and Vanderbilt, to protect their bodies from human ghouls, from biped hyenas, ever prowling about the sepulchers of the great and rich, to spirit away their treasures, and thus to

black-mail surviving love! Cremation would, at least, possess the merit of protection from the cruel cupidity of grave-robbers. If the ancient Jew is to be followed as the only civilized authority worth emulating, then discard the casket, employ only the winding sheet, bury before sundown on the day of decease, and always, without the gates of cities, and with hired mourners to do the wailing. Their method had merit over ours; it put the body in direct contact with the disinfecting earth, and it precluded the embarrassing cost of a casket. In fine, it would be a bold man who would affirm the prescription of a divine mandate for earth-burial, or a divine prohibition of cremation. The method employed is a mere matter of custom, and to dogmatize it into a religious creed, would be a profanation of ecclesiastical prerogative. The Egyptians embalmed, the Jews mainly entombed, the Christians follow the usage of the Hebrews, and the Hindoos, Greeks and Romans, cremated.

6. Finally the conscience of christian people is appealed to, and we are expected, notwithstanding the increase of population and the consequent problems of sanitation, to adhere to custom, and pay the penalty that nature exacts

when her known laws are flouted and the dictates of common sense are disregarded. "Have any of the Rulers believed in him?"—is still the questioning spirit of those who repose confidence in the authority of illustrious names and examples. But, as in Christ's and the Apostles' day, there were the noble Arimathean, and the wise Arcopagite, and retainers in Cæsar's household to accredit the lowly Nazarine, and to accept the shame of the cross, so, we are not without our "cloud of witnesses" to the merits of cremation. Indeed the muster-roll of adherents, or those commending it for sanitary reasons, is a mighty roster of crowned intellects in the realm of letters, science and sanitation. Among the worthies who have dared to speak, more or less approvingly of, and to announce their allegiance to cremation is a mighty army of physicians, and, I put in review the following illustrious men: Bishop Henry C. Potter, Rev. Dr. Phillips Brooks, Edward Everett Hale, Theodore C. Williams, C. C. Tiffany, R. S. McArthur, R. Heber Newton, D. S. Rainsford, A. T. Clarke, Robert W. Colyer, John W. Chadwick, G. W. Timlow, Henry M. Scudder,—a constellation as bright as the American pulpit

can match; and President C. K. Adams and Prof. Brainard G. Smith, of Cornell, Prof. D. H. Cochran, of the Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute, Prof. F. W. Taussig and Prof. Charles Elliot Norton, of Harvard, among collegians; George William Curtis, Charles Dudley Warner, Charles A. Dana, William Ward Hayes, Robert P. Porter, among editors; Abram Hewitt, Wm. Waldorf Astor, Andrew Carnegie, among capitalists; Hons. Charles Francis Adams, Josiah Quincy, George Hoadley, Cassius M. Clay, among statesmen; nearly every sanitary engineer in the country; and, among famous women, Rose Elizabeth Cleveland, Lillie Devereux Blake, Edith M. Thomas, Olive Thorne Miller, and a host of others. I have not named a tithe of those favorable to the method.

In conclusion, let everyone be persuaded in his own mind. It is not a matter for intolerance. To favor cremation, as one method of disposing of the dead, is not to oppose others. Personally, I have no word to say against those who prefer grave to urn-burial. The feelings of survivors are entitled to respect, and families should be left to decide this question for themselves. I will leave the matter, as to the disposal of my

own body, to those who prized me while living, and though they know that I have no prejudice against cremation, they shall be left to do with my body what is most consonant with their feelings. Having thoroughly examined the subject, I have felt authorized to present its merits. According to all liberty, I claim of them the same boon for myself. Knowing that I have "the courage of my convictions," if those who oppose my views on this subject, will be rational, they will be better prepared to accredit my sincerity when I speak on those subjects on which we agree. No matter what be the method of disposing of the cumbering clay, I hope, when I drop it, to mount "to joys unfading and secure," and to so "fall on sleep" that when Jesus descends to break the slumber of death, I may

"Burst my chains in sweet surprise,
And in my Savior's image rise."

"I believe in the Resurrection of the Body and the Life Everlasting." "I shall be satisfied when I awake in Thy [Christ's] likeness," and "see Him as He is"—"the fairest among ten thousand and altogether lovely."

